

Nexus Redux

Joan Mellen did *not* debunk the idea of LBJ's complicity in the murder of JFK.



Lyndon B. Johnson

I would like to invite all of those interested in the JFK assassination to read my article on the [JFK Historical Group Website](#) entitled *Nexus: The JFK Assassination's Place in History and a New Witness*. The article is an overview of the case and includes the introduction of a new witness, Gordon Ferrie. Ferrie had a Top Secret security clearance for 50+ years, beginning as a teenager assigned to a Marine presidential detail of protection at the end of the Eisenhower administration because of his expertise in shooting. Ferrie spent 10 years in the Marine Corps. After obtaining a Master's Degree in business, Ferrie moved into the world of banking, becoming one of the world's leading experts in international finance. This culminated with in his contact with one of LBJ's leading financial and political advisors, Eliot Janeway. Central to that article are Janeway's revelations about the JFK assassination, which he confided to Ferrie before his death in 1993.

For those of you who would like to know more about Ferrie, I have placed a large number of documents and pictures that validate and attest to his background and credentials on our website linked above.

Ferrie's most important revelation that I described in *Nexus* was pertaining to a meeting that took place at the Hotel Texas in Fort Worth, Texas the night before the assassination between Janeway, Johnson, and John Connally, as well as the wives of the latter two. Ferrie maintains that because of the investigations closing in on him and his probable removal from the 1964 Democratic ticket, Johnson stated it was necessary to go ahead with the plot against the president. When I asked Ferrie what Janeway's role in the plot was Ferrie bluntly replied, "Participant."



Gordon Ferrie

Ferrie's account of Janeway's confession is a central part of my argument in *Nexus* for

the potential complicity of LBJ in the JFK assassination. This runs counter to the argument made by some in the JFK assassination research community that Joan Mellen's book, *Faustian Bargains*, effectively debunks the idea of LBJ's potential involvement.

In a speech given at the *JFK Lancer* Conference in Dallas in November of 2016, Mellen asserted that she received from the FBI new fingerprint evidence associated with Mac Wallace. Wallace was a known associate of Johnson and a suspect in the Kennedy murder in the eyes of some. She suggests that the initial



Eliot Janeway

identification by fingerprint experts Nathan Darby and E.F. Hoffmeister, of an unidentified print found on a box on the sixth floor of the Texas Schoolbook Depository was that of Mac Wallace, is false and therefore eliminates the possibility of Johnson's involvement.

Mellen has produced experts who disagree with the conclusions of Darby and Hoffmeister based upon what she described as a clearer print she received in 2014 from the FBI in a response to a FOIA request. In an interview that Mellen did for *JFK Lancer* she suggests that the FBI, which has consistently stonewalled JFK researchers over the years, suddenly relented and released Wallace's entire file, including his fingerprints. In this interview Mellen thanks the FBI for their sudden cooperation and transparency and leaves the reader with the impression that her superior credentials and reputation caused the sudden change of heart by the FBI, resulting in the release of Wallace's file, free of charge. Long-time researcher Ed Tatro expressed deep concerns about the FBI's sudden cooperation with Mellen in an email to me recently:

Why would the FBI cooperate by giving her that file virtually un-redacted when it was mostly redacted when J. Harrison received it? Why did she receive it free? I never received anything free in my dealings with them. Why give that kind of cooperation to a JFK conspiracy researcher? During all my correspondence with the FBI, on a variety of different subjects--the origin of the manufacture of the bullets, the suspicious and contradictory paper bag documents, the validity or fabrication of the document alleging a Nixon/Ruby link in the 1940s-- I never received that kind of willingness to share or explain or cooperate from the FBI. I was stonewalled many times. In one instance, my mail, which they were supposed to forward to a retired FBI agent, was opened by them at headquarters instead of following the proper procedure. Their excuses were very lame. In fact, what they did to me was illegal. In another instance, regarding post office box anomalies, the FBI gave three different responses to three different JFK researchers who asked the same exact question. The FBI has covered up this crime for almost 54 years. Why did Mellen receive special consideration, un-redacted files, and all of them, free of charge? I find the entire relationship suspicious as hell and the credibility factor seems to be worth questioning.

Long-time researcher Richard Bartholomew, who has spent a great deal of time examining the Wallace fingerprint evidence, gave this author a blunt and detailed rebuttal to Mellen's assertions:

Mellen was wrong that there was only a single fingerprint collected from the sixth floor' boxes that was unidentified. Several were collected. She was wrong that 'Box A' was 'sitting at the edge of the entrance to the sixth floor.' The entrance is at the opposite corner from where 'Box A' was. She was wrong that the Department of Public Safety's inked prints and Austin Police Department's inked prints were one and the same and were unusable. In 1997, an unnamed original examiner, followed in 1998 by Darby, then by Hoffmeister all used only the DPS rolled prints, which were excellent quality.

She was wrong to talk to Mac Wallace's son, Michael, who gave her a weak, uncertain alibi for his father, but ignore Nathan Darby's son, Pastor Steve Darby. Steve, with whom his father lived, has always been absolutely certain that his father kept his certification up to date. She was wrong that her examiner's work was blind. His report called it the 'Warren Commission Exhibit' and the 'Wallace print.' And by 2013, the examination was required to be at least double blind to hide Mellen's known interest in the assassination. This lack of scientific blindness alone invalidates the examination. She was wrong that her examiner, Robert Garrett, agreed with her that the DPS prints were 'smudged' and unusable. Garrett said the prints were usable, and he used them. Only one of the twenty DPS prints, a flat one, was unusable, and nobody ever used it. She was wrong not to give Garrett the high quality print copies Darby and the other original examiners used. Still, Garrett could have compared the lower quality DPS print to the

higher quality Warren Commission Exhibit and seen the match. But he didn't. Instead, he compared two low-quality enlargements of Darby's working charts. The authenticity of the alleged Wallace military print she gave Garrett is suspect. She was wrong that Garrett concluded the Warren Commission print 'belonged to someone else entirely.' Simply put, what he concluded was that not all of the materials he was given for comparison were high enough quality for him to see, in his opinion only, Darby's match.

All of which makes Mellen's claims junk science. Garbage in, garbage out. But even with the match, it is wrong for Mellen or anyone to believe it puts Wallace on that sixth floor or his hands on those boxes. The provenance of Wallace's prints goes only as far as the Warren Commission's FBI latent print file, where they could have easily been planted.

Mellen makes the assumption, whether it is true or not, that the FBI prints are legitimate and concludes Johnson is innocent based on the idea that the alleged Wallace fingerprint is the Johnson accusers' "sole evidence." This couldn't be further from the truth. Whether it was Mac Wallace's fingerprint or not, it has little to do with the fact that multiple people close to LBJ have come forward over the years and accused him of complicity in the murder, nor does it explain Johnson's suspicious behavior before and after the assassination. Eliot Janeway, by way of Gordon Ferrie, is one more voice in a growing chorus of those who have spoken out about the potential involvement of LBJ in the JFK murder.

Among others who have made similar accusations are:

- Madeleine Brown. She claimed to be Johnson's mistress and to have attended a party at Texas oilman Clint Murchison's house the night before the assassination, where a number of powerful individuals, including LBJ, were present. Brown would claim that



Madeleine Brown

Johnson came out of a closed door meeting with others at the party and told her that “after tomorrow we won’t have to worry about those damn Kennedys.”

- Billie Sol Estes. According to his own admissions, Estes used Johnson’s influence to gain access to bank loans to buy farmland and build fertilizer tanks that never materialized. He concocted a scheme to rip off the federal government by buying up “cotton allotments” from farmers to receive crop adjustments from the government. According to Estes, Johnson received a handsome kickback in return for his use of political influence, with both making millions of dollars from their various schemes. Furthermore, Estes stated that when it became apparent he could not be bought off, Department of Agricultural official Henry Marshall was murdered by Mac Wallace, Johnson’s “hit man.” In 1984, Estes provided a voluntary statement to a Texas grand jury, implicating Wallace and Johnson in this murder. When the Department of Justice asked for more information, Estes responded by saying he would provide information on eight other murders ordered by Johnson, including JFK’s assassination.
- Clint Peoples. Peoples was considered one of the most honored law enforcement officers in Texas history. Peoples never accepted the Robertson County Sheriff’s ruling of suicide as the cause of Marshall’s death. Peoples’ dogged pursuit of the truth put him on the trail of both Wallace and LBJ. This statement from Peoples



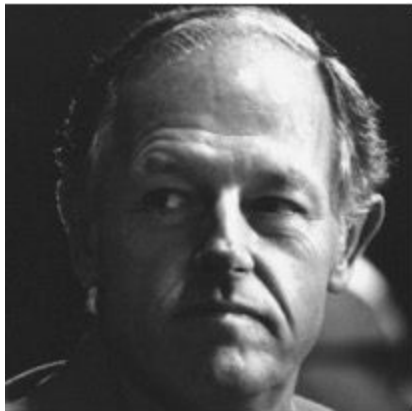
Clint Peoples

taken from Phil Nelson’s book, *LBJ Mastermind to Colossus* leaves little doubt he was referring to LBJ. Before I die, there will be one of the most jarring international scandals that has ever been as a result of this investigation. A lot of people take the position, oh well, he’s already dead, or well they are already out of the

office. To hell with that. Those people that got by with that need to be... if they're dead now, they still need to be exposed as a deterrent against further things like this.

- E. Howard Hunt. As stated in my article *Nexus*, "In 2007, Watergate conspirator and top CIA operative E. Howard Hunt made a deathbed confession that his son, Saint John Hunt, recorded. In this confession, he admitted to being part of "the big event in Dallas." He identified other important CIA operatives such as Cord Meyer, David Atlee Phillips, William Harvey, and David Morales as being involved. In addition, he would identify LBJ and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, as part of the plot."

It should be noted that *Time Magazine* and the *Boston Globe* have reported the Hunt confession as factual. David Talbot's well-received *The Devil's Chessboard* (2015), which recounts the secrecy and abuses of Allen Dulles' CIA, relied heavily on Hunt's confession as proof of CIA involvement in the plot against JFK. In an obvious display of selective preference,



E. Howard Hunt

Talbot takes seriously Hunt's assertion that the CIA's William Harvey, David Atlee Phillips, David Morales, and Cord Meyer were all involved in the conspiracy, but the author was unwilling to accept that the former's confession also pointed the finger at LBJ, suggesting he was beginning "to obfuscate."

¹ Talbot speculates, without any concrete evidence as proof, that Hunt was substituting LBJ for the real power behind the assassination, Allen Dulles, in order to protect his former

boss' legacy.

Despite the accusations of Brown, Estes, and Hunt, there are many within the JFK research community, including Joan Mellen, who do not accept any notion of Johnson's

¹ *The Devil's Chessboard*, David Talbot pg. 503.

complicity, and they focus on the involvement of intelligence instead. Mellen and like-minded researchers will attack Brown and Estes in particular, suggesting their stories cannot be substantiated, are not credible, and in many cases are just lies. As Talbot did, she utilized selective preferences, and, at times, appeared to contradict herself. In one example of a contradiction in *Faustian Bargains*, Mellen appears to accept the idea that Brown was in fact, Johnson's mistress,² and had a son by him named Steven Brown. She also accepts as valid a letter from Johnson's lawyer, Jerome T. Ragsdale, assuring Brown that Johnson would take care of her and the child financially. Later on in the book, however, Mellen seems to question that notion, suggesting Brown "claimed" to be LBJ's mistress. Which is it?

The Murchison Party

Having somewhat ceded the line of attack that some have pursued that suggests Brown wasn't Johnson's lover, Mellen then chooses to go after Brown's most explosive assertion that she and Johnson attended a party at the house of oilman Clint Murchison Sr.. To undermine Brown's story about the party, Mellen points out that over the years Brown mentioned certain people being at the gathering, then later on her life, she changed the list of attendees. This could be in part because Brown did several interviews later on in life where the party was discussed and her memory regarding details of the guest list may have faded, or she may have become confused about her story with age. Mellen would simply like to use the courtroom tactic of pointing out discrepancies in a person's story in order to throw out their entire testimony. The central core of Brown's story, that Johnson met with powerful people, including J. Edgar Hoover, at a party to discuss the assassination the night before it happened would never change.

² *Faustian Bargains*, Joan Mellen pp. 178-9.

Mellen and others also suggest Brown is the only witness who has come forward to confirm this party took place. This simply is not true. Mae Newman, a housekeeper of Murchison's, confirmed the party took place, and suggested that Hoover was there. Furthermore, Gordon Ferrie stated, based on Elliot Janeway's recollections, that Brown's version of the party was "absolutely accurate."

Attacking Estes

For those, like Mellen, who wish to debunk the notion of Johnson's complicity, the next target after Madeleine Brown is Billie Sol Estes and his credibility, or supposed lack thereof. There is little question that Estes is an easy target in that respect, although author Phil Nelson feels that some of the criticism directed toward him is undeserved.³

During Mellen's 2016 interview on the *JFK Lancer* website, interviewer Alan Dale referred to Estes as a "flim-flam man." There is no doubt Estes was a criminal and a con man, but it's also clear that he was *Johnson's* criminal and con man. Nonetheless, those who deny Johnson's involvement in the JFK case will use Estes' poor character as justification for completely dismissing his accusations against LBJ.

For Mellen, however, it is not as easy to set aside the Estes story. Mellen admits that Estes became a "silent partner" with Johnson on scams and corrupt deals, even describing the relationship as one of two evil "Faustian" bargains Johnson facilitated, (the other being Bobby Baker)⁴. Recognizing the Johnson/Estes relationship in *Faustian Bargains*, Mellen attempts to have it both ways, at least in terms of the Estes credibility issue. Mellen considers Estes a

³ Nelson stated to this author, "There is little question that Estes is an easy target in that respect...if one focuses only on the period of his life when he was acting as LBJ's corrupted agent, and ignores his many acts of contrition after he served his prison term; his sworn statements to the 1984 Grand Jury; and his attempts to rehabilitate his reputation in the final years of his life through his books and videos, as he struggled valiantly to redeem himself."

⁴ *Faustian Bargains*, Mellen pg. 113.

legitimate source in confirming that Mac Wallace had a relationship with Johnson⁵, but she rejects his assertions about Johnson's involvement in the JFK murder. In order to do this, Mellen feels compelled to come up with reasons why Estes would create what she referred to as an "urban legend." Estes' motive for lying, according to Mellen, is simply revenge. She speculates that Estes took the fall for Johnson and went to jail for years, only to have his former partner turn his back on him. Estes' payback would be in the form of concocting a whole series of lies about a string of murders, including JFK's.

Two major facts undermine Mellen's theory:

1. Estes remained silent about any complicity on Johnson's part in the aforementioned murders until he confided in U.S. Marshal Clint Peoples on his way back to jail in 1979, six years *after* the death of LBJ and over a decade after he was in a position of power. Why does one exact revenge on someone who is already dead? Certainly Estes could sully Johnson's legacy, but is that enough of a motive to make up an elaborate set of lies, even going so far to as to testify in front of a grand jury?

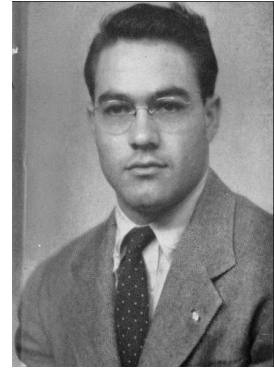
2. Peoples, whose credentials, credibility, and reputation are beyond question, believed Estes' accusation of Johnson's complicity and his use of Wallace as a hitman. Does Mellen's conclusions about Estes carry more weight than the conclusions of arguably the most decorated law enforcement official in Texas history? It should be noted that Peoples spent a great amount of time interviewing Estes while Mellen allegedly only met him once.

Wallace and Johnson

The central characters of Mellen's book are obviously LBJ and Mac Wallace. She leaves no doubt there was definitely a relationship between the two, and as the title of the book

⁵ Ibid pg. 111.

suggests, it was a corrupt one. Reviewer Jim DiEugenio was taken aback by Mellen's unrelenting attack on Johnson's lifelong corruption and character, even suggesting she might have "overdone it." His overall review was still a positive one, no doubt because of Mellen's "debunking" of LBJ's complicity in JFK's murder. Whereas others have suggested otherwise, Mellen believes that Johnson did *not* use his power and influence to get Wallace a suspended sentence for the first degree murder



Mac Wallace

of Doug Kinser, a golf pro who was having an affair with Wallace's lover, who happened to be LBJ's sister. It should be pointed out, however, that Wallace's defense attorney in the case was long-time Johnson associate John Cofer. Even if Johnson had no corrupting influence over the judge or jury, his handpicked lawyer certainly had a role in the favorable sentencing that Wallace received. It should be noted that Clint Peoples suspected Johnson's involvement in Wallace's suspended sentence.

Mellen does indicate that LBJ used his influence to secure a job for Wallace at defense contractor Temco, a job that required a security clearance. She found it troubling that a convicted murderer could be hired for such a position, stating "there is no apparent explanation for this unlikely scenario."⁶ She concludes there is a strong circumstantial case (but not documentary proof) that the head of Temco, D.H. Byrd, who she described as "supporter of Lyndon Johnson" and "indebted" to him for gaining defense contracts, hired Wallace as a favor to Johnson.⁷ She also indicates it was Johnson who secured for Wallace the necessary security clearance to be able to work at Temco. In the end, however, Mellen stops short of any deeper looks into the Johnson-Wallace-Byrd connection, even when it obviously demands further investigation. It is common knowledge among JFK assassination researchers that Byrd owned

⁶ Ibid pg. 108.

⁷ Ibid pg. 108.

the Texas School Book Depository where Lee Harvey Oswald was hired shortly before the assassination. Is it such a leap of faith to connect the dots here and consider that this could potentially link Johnson to the JFK murder? Mellen's book fails to even mention Byrd's ownership of the TSBD and the questions it raises.

David Talbot also found himself confronted with the issue of the ownership of the TSBD, but was wholly unprepared for it, when he appeared on anti-conspiracist Chris Matthews' show *Hardball* in 2007. Although Talbot, having just released his outstanding book, *Brothers*, handled himself very well in this appearance for the most part, when Matthews repeatedly badgered him with the question about how Oswald was able to get the job at the TSBD before the parade route was established, Talbot really had no legitimate answer.

Apparently, after his exchange with Matthews, Talbot did his homework on the TSBD and discusses Byrd's ownership of it and his various connections in some detail in *Devil's Chessboard*. His research led him to evidence that could potentially implicate LBJ. Talbot admits that Byrd was a "crony of Lyndon Johnson."⁸ He also points out that Byrd belonged to the Suite 8F Group, a group of "right-wing Texas tycoons" who "financed the rise of LBJ." He even questions whether maybe Byrd, along with his associates in the national security field (but excludes Johnson), maneuvered Oswald into the TSBD. Ultimately, Talbot chooses to address the issue of a Johnson/Byrd connection in a similar fashion to how he dealt with Hunt's accusation against LBJ; by simply treading lightly. He admits that there is a definite link between Johnson and Byrd, but he then chooses to pass it off as merely one of those "curiosities" in history.⁹

A CIA CONNECTION

⁸ *Devil's Chessboard*, Talbot pg. 539

⁹ *Ibid* pg. 512

The Byrd link isn't the only lead Mellen comes across but fails to pursue further. In her *JFK Lancer* interview she seemed fascinated with the fact that the defense contractor Brown & Root was filled with CIA "assets." In her book she also states what has already been generally known: Brown & Root were "recipients of Johnson's manipulation of government money into the hands of his friends."¹⁰ The discovery of a CIA link to a company so closely connected to LBJ could have been an important lead for Mellen, in that she strongly believes in a CIA connection to the Kennedy murder, but again she goes no further with it. Perhaps because to follow those ideas would unravel the premise and thesis of her entire book?

Why Not Consider LBJ as a Suspect in JFK's Murder?

Clearly, *Faustian Bargains* depicts Johnson as evil and corrupt. In her 2016 *JFK Lancer* interview she suggests that LBJ was an "awful" person whom she regretted voting for in the 1964 presidential election. In the end, however, she can't bring herself to consider the possibility of LBJ's complicity in the JFK murder. Why? The answer to that might lie in a simple direct statement she made in her *JFK Lancer* interview: "New Orleans." In *Farewell to Justice*, her biography on New Orleans' DA, Jim Garrison, she lays out what she believes to be a strong case for a CIA plot against Kennedy. Evidence pointing towards a Texas angle in the assassination undermines her and the rest of the "CIA did it" group's theories about what happened in Dallas.

The mistake they make is assuming the conspiracy was connected to intelligence, therefore the possibility of a Texas connection must be eliminated. By doing so, they fail to examine potential intersecting links between the two, like the previously mentioned E. Howard Hunt confession that included Johnson as a plotter, or the fact that David Atlee Phillips, one of

¹⁰ *Faustian Bargains*, Mellen pg. 66.

the most suspicious characters in terms of a potential CIA plot, was a close associate with ultimate Texas insider Gordon McLendon.

A just released document numbered 104-10215-10213 by the National Archives provides another potential link. The document states that Earl Cabell, the mayor of Dallas at the time of JFK's murder, was a contract agent of the CIA. At the time, Cabell's brother, Charles, was Deputy Director of the CIA, but up until the release of this document there was no direct evidence of Earl's connections to the agency. New Orleans' DA Jim Garrison saw Mayor



Earl Cabell

Cabell's involvement in the last-minute change in the parade route as "highly suspicious," believing it "raised serious questions."¹¹ Cabell was obviously tied to powerful interests in Texas, as well. According to author Phil Nelson, Earl Cabell was "at the center of a Dallas crowd that was tied directly into LBJ's circle for many years before the assassination." Nelson stated in his book *LBJ From*

Mastermind to "The Colossus" that Dallas police officer Jack Revill accompanied Mayor Cabell to a party at his brother's Washington, D.C. home shortly after the assassination. Revill reported that there were military officials there "celebrating" Kennedy's death with toasts.¹²

In her 2015 presentation at the Oswald Conference in New Orleans, Mellen suggested that Jim Garrison hated Johnson and believed he was part of the cover-up. In fact, most of those who believe in an intelligence involvement in the assassination will admit to Johnson's

¹¹ *On the Trail of Assassins*, Jim Garrison pg 176.

¹² *LBJ: From Mastermind to "The Colossus"* Phil Nelson pg 331.

participation in a cover-up in the form of the Warren Commission, but usually that is the end point for them regarding his involvement.

As this author points out in *Nexus*, this raises a logical question:

“There are those who focus primarily on the involvement of the CIA in the assassination who will suggest LBJ participated in the cover-up afterwards, but not the murder itself. If this is true, one would have to question why LBJ would put his presidency at risk by covering up the crime of the century if he was, in fact, completely innocent.”

Selective Preferences

Mellen chooses to use Malcolm Wallace’s son, Michael, as a witness exonerating him in the involvement of both murders of Henry Marshall and JFK at the time of both incidents. The younger Wallace, an adolescent, recounted that his father was in California during each occasion. Mellen is willing to trust a family member and accept the son’s alibi for his father, because having met with him on several occasions, she found him to be a person of strong character. In Mellen’s 2016 *JFK Lancer* presentation she said:

“...years of work as a biographer persuaded me of Michael Wallace’s bona fides. After a while, after hundreds of interviews, you develop a second sense of who is telling the truth, even as, inevitably, you are sometimes wrong.”

Mellen chooses to draw conclusions about the credibility of witnesses based on her *superior* character judgements. Rather than simply deferring to her expertise in this area, this author chooses to make his own character judgments. Having met Madeleine Brown, whose story Mellen discounts despite never having met her, I can attest that she [Brown] came across as sincere and credible.

Johnson’s Character, Psychological State, and Motives

This author goes into great detail in *Nexus*, detailing how authors, historians, and those close to Johnson have described him as “amoral, ruthless, crude”, and even “borderline

psychotic.” Johnson’s press secretary, George Reedy, was quoted as saying, “As a human being... he was a miserable person, a sadist, and a bully... with no sense of loyalty... who enjoyed tormenting and humiliating those closest to him.” Ed Tatro described Johnson as, “bad as you can be and still be a human being” and “chronic liar.”

I summarized what experts regarded as Johnson’s psychological state in *Nexus*:

At least four qualified psychologists and/or psychiatrists who have examined and written about Johnson’s life have concluded that he displayed a variety of psychological problems. Doctors Hyman L. Muslin and Thomas H. Jobe wrote *Lyndon Johnson: the Tragic Self, a Psychohistorical Portrait*. They point out that LBJ was obsessed with attention to detail and secrecy. In addition, they maintain that Johnson not only relished the idea of producing a crisis, but shrewdly chose the times for the maximum theatrical effect. Maybe most importantly, they cited LBJ as having virtually no capacity for empathy, nor could he experience mental anguish for others. Doctors Jablow Hershman and Gerald Tolchin, who co-wrote *Power Beyond Reason: the Mental Collapse of Lyndon Johnson*, characterized him as a “manic depressive” and “the most psychologically unstable man ever to assume the presidency.” Tolchin would also specifically state that Johnson suffered from bipolar disorder.

The fact that Johnson lacked morality and exhibited psychotic behavior doesn’t necessarily prove he was complicit in JFK’s murder, but they certainly demonstrate he was capable of it.

In terms of ambition, Johnson clearly had a well-documented life-long obsession to be president of the United States. Preeminent Johnson biographer, Robert Caro, suggested that Johnson’s hunger for power was “so fierce and consuming that no consideration of morality or ethics, no cost to himself, or anyone else, could stand before it.” It wasn’t just about political ambition for Johnson, however; it was also about political survival. As stated in *Nexus*,

“There’s no way to underestimate the depth of the trouble LBJ found himself in by 1963. By that time, there had been multiple scandals associated with Johnson that had the potential not only to have him removed from the ticket in 1964, but possibly to put him in jail. His troubles all went away the instant Kennedy was shot in Dallas.”

James Wagenvoord, assistant to *LIFE* magazine's creative editor in 1963, pointed out in his presentation at this author's 2014 *Warren Commission Fifty Years Later Conference* that his magazine was creating a three-part exposé focusing on Johnson's relationship with Bobby Baker. Baker, a Johnson protege, had become secretary of the Senate, and was under investigation for various scandals and corrupt behavior. Wagenvoord made it clear *LIFE's* intention was to end “Johnson's political career, and possibly send him to prison.” The fact that Bobby Kennedy's Justice Department was feeding *LIFE* “tremendous info” according to Wagenvoord, makes it clear what was rumored throughout Washington: that the Kennedys wanted LBJ off the ticket. Simply put, Johnson faced political extinction and possible jail time if something didn't happen. In truth, if there had been no Dallas, Johnson would probably have suffered the same fate that former Vice President Spiro Agnew experienced.

The person whose research Joan Mellen relied heavily on, Jay Harrison, stated in an email correspondence to Ed Tatro in 2000:

"The biggest hint was Lyndon Johnson. That man was literally up to his ass in alligators in the last year of JFK's presidency. But there was always a very clear sense---sense--- that powerful events were in motion that would save him. So let me ask you---who could save Johnson?"

No one was positioned better to execute a plot against Kennedy than LBJ. The FBI and the Secret Service had complete control of the evidence after the assassination and would be responsible for any manipulation or destruction of the evidence. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, another man whose career was in jeopardy as long as the Kennedys were in power, was a long-time friend and next door neighbor to Johnson. Head of the Secret Service, James Rowley, was also close to LBJ. Secret Service agent in charge, Emory Roberts, gave some strange orders during the presidential motorcade that some have construed as security stripping.

Roberts was also known to have been close to Johnson and, according to Secret Service expert Vince Palamara, benefited from the relationship after the assassination.¹³ Over the years, much evidence has been uncovered that points to the possibility of the medical evidence and autopsy of JFK being distorted and manipulated. Once again, it was Johnson who had complete power over both of these the moment JFK died. He oversaw the Secret Service and the Joint Chiefs, each of whom had possession of, at different times, the so called “best evidence,” JFK’s body.

As I stated in *Nexus*:

“The thought of this may be too much for many Americans to embrace, but the fact remains that Johnson was in the unique position of having access to the machinery of government to complete a violent overthrow of the sitting president and to control the cover-up after the fact.”

Talbot’s Conclusions

In *Devil’s Chessboard*, Talbot makes a compelling, if not brilliant, argument, with the use of circumstantial evidence, to implicate Allen Dulles as a principle character behind the Kennedy assassination. However, unlike Johnson’s potential complicity where there are multiple witnesses (Brown, Estes, Janeway, and Hunt), no one has previously come forward to point the finger at Dulles.

There is also plenty of circumstantial evidence that could be considered that implicates Johnson, particularly involving the suspicious activities he and his associates engaged in before and after the assassination. It was Johnson and/or his cronies and sycophants (primarily John Connally and Jack Valenti) who persuaded (possibly lured?) Kennedy to come to Dallas,¹⁴ controlled the building where the “patsy” was conveniently working, destroyed key evidence by

¹³ From Vince Palamara’s presentation at the *2016 JFK Assassination Conference* in Dallas.

¹⁴ Johnson went so far as to announce the Texas trip in April *before* Kennedy gave his approval for it.

sending Connally's suit to the cleaners and having the President's limo refurbished, and finally appointing a commission whose charge it was to satisfy the public that Oswald acted alone.

One more piece of information raises further suspicions about LBJ: Senator and close friend of JFK, George Smathers, would recount a conversation he had with the President shortly before the Dallas trip in which he suggested that Johnson was pressuring JFK to have Jackie ride with him in the motorcade and have his political enemy in Texas, Ralph Yarborough, ride with the President instead. According to Smathers, JFK would say; "... you've got Lyndon, who's insisting that Jackie ride with him and... Johnson doesn't want to ride with Yarborough."¹⁵

Regardless of the evidence that points towards Johnson's involvement, Talbot will come no closer to that possibility than simply admitting that E Howard Hunt , whose earlier mentioned confession he regarded as legitimate, may have seen Johnson as being a "*passive accessory or even an active accomplice*."¹⁶ In the end, Talbot dips his foot in the water in regards to LBJ's complicity in the Kennedy murder, but refuses to jump in.

Mellen's Agenda

Talbot may have sidestepped LBJ's potential complicity, but in the case of Mellen, it involved glaring omission. Jay Harrison's research had to be an eye-opener to Mellen. The problem was that there were leads there, in terms of possible involvement by LBJ, that were too difficult to ignore, but she did anyway in order to protect her view that intelligence was behind the assassination. The most blatant example of this occurs during her *JFK Lancer* interview with Alan Dale in 2016.

During the course of this session, at a point when Dale was heaping praise on her for debunking the possibility of any involvement of Johnson in the JFK assassination, Mellen

¹⁵ *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960-1963*, Michael Beschloss pp. 665-666.

¹⁶ *Devil's Chessboard*, Talbot pg. 504.

surprised her interviewer and flatly stated, “*I have found a reliable witness that Johnson had foreknowledge of the assassination.*” She never stated who it was (at least in the interview), but nevertheless, it is a stunning revelation coming from someone who was trying to close doors, not open them, in terms of Johnson’s involvement. Presuming for a moment that her “reliable witness” was correct, even if Johnson was guilty only of foreknowledge of the assassination and nothing else, his failure to alert authorities would still make him complicit in the murder of JFK.

It is ironic that two of the major advocates for the involvement of the CIA in the Kennedy murder, David Talbot and Joan Mellen, were forced to overlook where their own research had taken them to avoid an admission of LBJ’s complicity.¹⁷

Nexus

53 years after the death of JFK can we, as Americans, begin to view the assassination in a broader context and conclude that the assassination was neither the act of a lone assassin or a lone *entity*? As characterized in my previous article, JFK was a huge threat to the power structure as it existed in 1963 on three different levels: the National Security establishment and its covert arm, the CIA, organized crime, and the powerful right-wing Texas Oil interests who backed LBJ. Kennedy made dangerous enemies of all three by seriously threatening their agenda, and in some cases, their existence.

Gordon Ferrie spoke of the conspiracy against Kennedy as a “nexus”, a series of connecting links formulated into a central place. When looking backward from 2017, with the

¹⁷ Author Phil Nelson spoke further about this, stating “it is stunning how practically every major biographer of Lyndon Johnson was able to ignore all of that, and his ties to Billie Sol Estes, or brush them away with a perfunctory wave of the hand and the comment that Estes wasn’t ‘credible.’ The excuse, of course, was that Johnson was never actually charged and found guilty in a court of law of being involved with Estes in the performance of his crimes. Yet that was merely due to his expert manipulative skills of secretiveness, his rules to everyone involved to never commit anything to writing about any of it, handling such matters through one or more layers of aides to do the “dirty work” and allowing only untraceable cash in the transfers, transported and delivered by his most trusted aides. Johnson’s well practiced techniques protected him exquisitely, and the only books to include these mentions of a “darker side” are those that refrain from participating in the Orwellian remake of the real persona of the Svengali-like thirty-sixth President into a respectable, honorable and trustworthy man, which was essentially the opposite of the person he really was. Yet that is the “official image” as sanctioned by the mythmakers that one is supposed to have of Johnson. The lesson to be learned is that if one masters the art of criminality, and becomes so good at it that they’re never caught, that is as good as being completely innocent.”

LBJ: *From Mastermind to “The Colossus”* Phil Nelson pg 7.

preponderance of facts we now have pointing toward conspiracy, one can arrive at the rational conclusion that powerful forces coalesced around a common objective; to remove a President that was threatening their very survival.

If one arrives at this conclusion, how can he or she honestly leave out the individual who not only had the most to gain or lose, but also happened to be so deeply connected with these same powerful forces? The answer as to why both Talbot and Mellen choose to stay away from Johnson's potential involvement in the Kennedy murder is easy to understand. Both writers want to maintain credibility in their field while delving into a topic that often times gets one marginalized. Accusing Johnson would make them appear even more "fringe". By refusing to do so, they may be ultimately missing a central piece of the JFK assassination story.

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